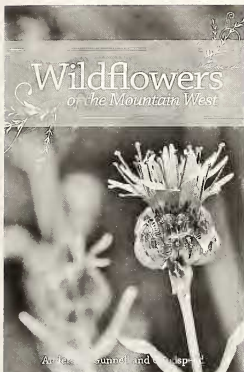


## REVIEW



*Wildflowers of the Mountain West*. By RICHARD M. ANDERSON, JAYDEE GUNNELL, AND JERRY L. GOODSPEED. 2012. Utah State University Press, an imprint of University Press of Colorado, Boulder, CO. 300 pp. ISBN 978-0-87421-895-4 (spiral bound) \$24.95; ISBN: 978-0-87421-896-1 (e-book) \$20.00.

When I arrived in Utah as an assistant professor three years ago, I was given Field Botany to teach. For me, this assignment was a bit intimidating since my formal botanical training was limited. As a developmental geneticist, I am much more comfortable dealing with genes than with genera. Always an enthusiastic amateur botanist (emphasis on amateur), I eagerly embarked on a crash course to learn the 200 trees and shrubs that we require our students to recognize in the field and on campus. I quickly caught the bug, and lately have been exploring my local herbaceous flora as well. So I was delighted to see that a new field guide, *Wildflowers of the Mountain West*, is now available. In many ways this book is exactly what I needed.

The first thing I did when my copy arrived was to find the new acquaintances from the canyon close to my home that I had met and keyed out last summer. I would expect any decent field guide to include the most common flowers, and this one delivered. Like searching for friends in my high school year book, my botanical compatriots were all there. Each species is given two pages, with taxonomy, description, habitat and county-level distribution map on the first page, and high-resolution photos on the second page. Each species has a close-up of the flower as well

as the whole plant in situ. These photos are likely the most useful part of the book, and the authors clearly took care to deliver a quality product. The species are grouped first by flower color and then by family, which I found to be helpful. With a little knowledge of families, zeroing in on, for example, the possible purple-flowered, pea-family contenders, is very quick. The species descriptions (130 in total) comprise the majority of the book, with some introductory material on the mountain west and simple illustrations of floral and leaf morphology terms to round it out.

The authors readily admit that using the most current taxonomy is not one of their concerns. Nevertheless, keeping *Penstemon* (Plantaginaceae), *Castilleja* (Orobanchaceae), *Mimulus* (Phrymaceae), and others as members of the old polyphyletic Scrophulariaceae seems unnecessarily old-fashioned, even to me. Using the current taxonomy would not have been that onerous (at least at the family level). Another concern is that the book completely ignores exotics. I understand the desire to tout our native flora, however, the most obvious and showy flowers a naïve botanist is likely to encounter on his or her first foray are the non-native dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*) and whitetop (*Lepidium draba*). Providing pages for common weeds would have provided important information to budding flower enthusiasts. Once you know that the attractive flower you just found is actually crowding out other native beauties, it is suddenly illuminated by an entirely different light. But these concerns are really trifles, and don't substantially take away from an otherwise excellent field guide. I am happy to have *Wildflowers of the Mountain West* on my book shelf, and expect it will come into the field with me as a handy first reference as soon as spring arrives.

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